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STATE PARKS TO SEE MODEST INCREASE IN FEES

Addresses the need to provide maintenance at camping, recreational facilities

Responding to a directive from the Massachusetts Legislature, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has sent a list of proposed hikes to fund the maintenance and operation of the state's parks, skating rinks and forestry lands.

"Because of their popularity, we're confident that those who enjoy these facilities, will understand the need for continued maintenance and care, and that they will view what are optional assessments as necessary and appropriate," said Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Roy Herzfelder. "Camping customers in particular should note that they can still reserve one of the 3,300 campsites at our 29 campgrounds before April 1st and avoid any increase."

Each year, nearly 500,000 campers visit the 29 DCR campgrounds with approximately 45% comprised of residents arriving from other states or visiting from foreign countries. Massachusetts residents have paid slightly lower fees – and will continue to do so – compared to the fees charged for non-residents.

If adopted the specific increases delineated, which cover leases, rents, licenses, permits and fees are expected to raise an estimated \$400,000 in FY 2005 and slightly more than \$1 million in FY 2006. Unless otherwise specifically directed, most of the fees are deposited directly into the state's General Fund.

The proposed rate structure also begins to address one of the legacies of the merger of the former Metropolitan District Commission and Department of Environmental Management. That merger – which created the DCR – left behind two rate structures, one of which will be streamlined under this proposal, specifically so-called "special-use permits."

Special-use permits are required for events held at state parklands that are deemed to be in addition to the intended use. Special-use permits include: promotional events, dog shows,

walkathons and other charity fundraisers. The proposed changes announced here will establish a simple graduated rate, depending on the size of the event, but will allow non-profit organizations to pay half the fee that is charged to for-profit organizations.

An estimated \$138,000 is expected in FY '05 as a result of increases in the permits for a group of private boat clubs and boathouses that are located on state property. The 25 facilities, whose permits recently came up for renewal, were notified of the increase in December 2004. Those permits fees are now based on the amount of public land and/or waterfront footage utilized, the types of use and the membership level. There are now six remaining permits for private boat clubs and boathouses on state property whose permits have not yet come up for renewal. When they do, these boat clubs and boathouses will be assessed permit fees that are reflective of the new rate structure.

While the general population will not be affected by the increase in timber sale activities from the 285,000 acres of the state's forests and parks, an estimated increase of \$75,000 in FY '05 will result. The forest management program will be conducted in keeping with the state's accredited "Green Certification." That designation, which Massachusetts received in 2004 by the independent Forest Stewardship Council, requires that a forest management plan is conducted in a long-term sustainable manner that includes recreation, biodiversity, water quality, rare species, etc.

The other states for which Massachusetts sought information on comparable rates for camping and day-use include: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland North Carolina, Michigan, Illinois, California, Florida and Texas. Two public hearings were held in January 2005 on the proposed increases. Massachusetts state parks have assessed user fees since 1934.

The following chart delineates the proposed fee changes for camping and pavilion fees:

Fee Chart	Current Fee	Last Updated	Proposed Fee April 1, 2005
<u>Picnic Pavilion</u>			

Small	\$35	May 2001	\$50
Large	\$75	May 2001	\$100

Camping Fees	Per Day/Per Site
<u>Coastal Campsite</u>	

Fee Chart	Current Fee	Last Updated	Proposed Fee April 1, 2005
<u>Coastal Campsite</u>			

MA Resident	\$12	April 2000	\$15
Out of State	\$15	April 2000	\$17

Inland Campsite
MA Resident
Out of State

MA Resident	\$10	April 2000	\$12
Out of State	\$12	April 2000	\$14

<u>Limited Service Site</u>			
MA Resident	\$5	April 2000	\$ 8
Out of State	\$6	April 2000	\$10
<u>Groupsites</u>	\$25	April 2000	1-25 people \$25 \$1 per person over 25 people
<u>Safari Field sites</u>	\$10 per unit	April 2000	\$15 per unit
<u>Cabin, one room</u>	\$25	April 2000	\$30
<u>Cabin, two room</u>	\$30	April 2000	\$40
<u>Cabin, three room</u>	\$35	April 2000	\$50
<u>Yurt, small</u>	\$25	April 2000	\$30
<u>Yurt, large</u>	\$30	April 2000	\$40
<u>Dump station</u>			
Campers	\$0 (included in site cost)		\$ 0
Non campers	\$5	April 2000	\$15

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